

awaiting an omnibus bill, we know not what is in it, but I plead with the Republican majority to do as they have been saying on the floor every day, put those moneys for the teachers right in the classrooms and not fund it in any sort of circuitous way where we know not how that money is getting to our schools.

EDUCATION

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, as we face the 21st century, our education is our best national defense. Education must function as a means to prepare our children for the 21st century and the global economy. To help meet this goal, we must aim to strengthen our public schools that serve the majority of our children. Reducing class size should be our first priority. Putting those teachers in the classroom should be our first priority. This will allow teachers to focus on basics such as reading and writing in the early ages. We also need to look to modernize our classrooms. Across this country, we need to assure that our classrooms are well-equipped to meet the technology of the 21st century. We have to assure that our youngsters will have a fresh start to be able to compete in the global economy. Our schools are crumbling across this country. We need to invest in our children and in the future of this country as our national defense depends on it. Our level of education will determine our national defense. Let us also focus on providing our children the assistance that they need.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF CONGRESS

(Mr. THUNE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. THUNE. Mr. Speaker, for 40 years the liberal Congress spent all their time trying to figure out ways to spend the American people's money and build a bigger Federal Government. Now they are accusing us of being a do-nothing Congress. They are right. By their definition, we have done nothing to raise taxes, we have done nothing to build new Federal bureaucracies, we have done nothing to take power from hardworking Americans and give it to Washington bureaucrats.

However, we have balanced the budget for the first time in 30 years, we have cut taxes on hardworking Americans for the first time in 16 years, saved Medicare, reformed welfare, and reformed the IRS. At the same time we have lowered interest rates on student loans. The liberals are right. We have done nothing liberal. But we have done a lot for the future of the American people.

ON EDUCATION FUNDING CUTS

(Ms. VELÁZQUEZ asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today deeply disturbed by the Republican majority's continual disregard for the future of our children. Year after year they attack important education programs and now they refuse to provide funds for school construction and smaller classroom size.

Have you not learned? The American people believe in educational opportunities. They want their children to learn and succeed. But for many of our children, a schoolroom is not a place to learn but a place to survive. Like our roads and bridges, our Nation's schoolrooms are crumbling. In my district in New York, children are trying to learn in conditions that we should be ashamed of, crumbling walls, leaking roofs, and overcrowding. How can a child be expected to learn to read and write when the walls are literally falling down around them? Democrats are committed to making sure that every child in this country has a modern, safe school in which to learn. This is a commitment we have made to our children and it is a commitment worth fighting for.

NO GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

(Mr. METCALF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, Republicans have a message for the President: "Don't shut down the government, Mr. President. Don't shut down the government as a way to divert attention from the ethical problems now plaguing the White House."

The differences between Congress and the White House are not large. The President wants to spend more money on education bureaucrats in Washington. Republicans want to spend the money on the classrooms. Surely a compromise can be reached and the government can continue to operate. We disagree about the approach but we do not disagree about the shared goal of improved education. As a former teacher, I know that local control of schools is absolutely essential. We do understand the political reality that the President faces which forces him to support more Federal education programs, more bureaucrats at the Department of Education and more Federal control over local schools. Our message is simple: "Don't shut down the government. Work with Congress to arrive at a satisfactory compromise. Don't shut down the government, Mr. President."

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REPUBLICANS SENDING A MIXED MESSAGE TO AMERICA'S CHILDREN

(Ms. PELOSI asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend President Clinton for his strong commitment to the education of America's children. This issue has been central to his public service, and it is central to the lives of America's children.

It is important for our children to receive a clear message from us, and I am afraid that our Republican colleagues are sending a mixed message to America's children. Children are smart. When we tell them that education is important for their own self fulfillment, for the competitiveness of our country, indeed for our national defense, they get one message. They get another message when we say it is important, but we are going to send you to a school that is crumbling, leaking, not equipped with the wiring for modernization, and we are not going to support, the Republicans are not going to support, school construction so that they can be in smaller classes.

Smaller classes net more teachers. That is why President Clinton's proposal for 100,000 new teachers is so important. It is not for administrative cost, and it is not about local control. It is about saying to local governments this money is for teachers, it is not for administration.

Stop insulting the intelligence of America's children. Support President Clinton's school construction plan and 100,000 new teachers.

THE BEST SOLUTION IS TO BUILD SCHOOLS

(Mr. MEEKS of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Speaker, just 9 months ago I was not a Member of this body, but I remember listening to the President's statement on education during his State of the Union address, and I stand here today as a Member of the Congress probably for one reason: education. We can build prisons, or we can build schools. I think that all Americans know that the best solution is to build schools. When we build schools, we are showing our children that we have confidence in them. Oftentimes when they go astray, we say what happened to the children of the day? What is going on with the children today?

Mr. Speaker, I tell colleagues it is not the children, it is us. It is us who fail to put our money where our mouths are and put it where our most important commodities are, our children. We must, at all sacrifices, make sure that we build schools; therefore, we will not have to build prisons. Make sure that we make the class sizes smaller so that we can understand, these kids can understand, what is going on, and the teachers can relate to them.

This is what this is all about. We must not leave here until we have put money in schools as opposed to other things. We must build our schools.